

16 May 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

In March 2023, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland visited Helmsdale Primary School and Nursery Class. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the acting headteacher and staff.

Helmsdale Primary School nursery class was inspected by the Care Inspectorate within the last 18 months. Therefore, we have agreed with the local authority and school that the nursery class is not part of this inspection.

The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

- The recent improvements made by the acting headteacher to strengthen the consistency of learning and teaching and improve procedures to track children's progress in learning.
- The effective use of the local environment and community partnerships to enrich children's learning experiences, particularly through outdoor learning.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the headteacher and a representative from The Highland Council.

- Improve approaches to planning in each curriculum area to ensure children build on their prior learning more effectively as they move through the school. Staff should ensure that assessment forms part of the planning process.
- Develop further a shared understanding of national expectations and standards about what children can achieve across all areas of the curriculum.
- Raise children's attainment in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics. In doing so, staff should prioritise developing children's writing skills.

We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the school's work using quality indicators from [How good is our school? \(4th edition\)](#). Quality indicators help schools, local authorities and inspectors to judge what is working well and what needs to be improved. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers details of our evaluations to keep track of how well Scottish schools are doing.

Here are Education Scotland's evaluations for Helmsdale Primary School

| Quality indicators | Evaluation |
|--|---------------------|
| Learning, teaching and assessment | satisfactory |
| Raising attainment and achievement | satisfactory |
| Descriptions of the evaluations are available from: How good is our school? (4th edition), Appendix 3: The six-point scale | |

A more detailed document called Summarised Inspection Findings (SIF) will be available on the Education Scotland website at: [Reports page | Inspection reports | Education Scotland](#)

What happens next?

We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. The Highland Council will inform parents/carers about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Pamela Adamson
HM Inspector